DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 314 657 CG 022 190

AUTHOR Hamberger, L. Kevin; Hastings, James E.
TITLE Personality Structure of Batterers and Nonbatterers: Qualitative and Quantitative Differences.
PUB DATE 12 Aug 89
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association (97th, New Orleans, LA, August 11-15, 1989).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Battered Women; Comparative Analysis; *Family Violence; *Males; *Personality Traits; *Psychological Characteristics

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to compare sufficiently large samples of male batterers (N=99) and help-seeking nonbatterers (N=71) on factor structure of the eight personality scales on the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (MCMI) and MCMI profiles within similar subgroup types. The groups were matched on age, education range, marital status, and race. Factor analyses of the eight MCMI personality subscales for the two groups revealed three factors for each group, accounting for 80% of the variance in each group. For the batterer sample, the three factors derived were borderline/schizoidal, histrionic/narcissistic, and antisocial/narcissistic. The three factors derived for nonbatterers were avoidant, antisocial/narcissistic, and passive/aggressive. Further analyses revealed that the two groups were qualitatively different on all but one factor for each group. Between-group analyses on the eight subscales between factor 2 nonviolent men and factor 3 batterers indicated that the batterer group scored higher than the nonbatterer group on avoidant, aggressive, and negativistic subscales and lower on the conforming subscale. In general, nonviolent men were more highly represented in the narcissistic/aggressive factor while batterers were more highly represented in the avoidant/negativistic factor. These findings suggest that there are both qualitative and quantitative differences in personality characteristics of domestically violent and nonviolent men. (NB)

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Personality Structure of Batterers and Nonbatterers: Qualitative and Quantitative Differences

L. Kevin Hamberger
Department of Family Medicine
Medical College of Wisconsin

James E. Hastings
Department of Psychiatry
Medical College of Wisconsin

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Paper presented at the meeting of the American Psychological Association, New Orleans, LA, August 12, 1989.

Personality of Structure of Batterers and Nonbatterers
Qualitative and Quantitative Differences

It is generally agreed upon by activists, clinicians and researchers, alike, that the age-old social epidemic of male-to-female spouse abuse is rooted in and maintained by sexist, patriarchal social, cultural and institutional norms and practices. One aspect of this issue that has aroused considerable debate, however, has to do with psychological characristics of batterers. One prevalant idea is that batterers are basically no different than nonbatterers in personality characteristics and mental health needs. Instead, batterers are seen either as oversocialized males or as representing one (albeit extreme) end of a continuum of forms of male privilege and ownership vizaviz women. Moreover, from the latter perspective, attempts to describe batterers as psychologically different from nonbatterers have been criticized as psychologizing and privatizing a basically social problem.

An alternative, although not incompatible, conceptualization to that noted above is that study of psychological characteristics of batterers is useful and important, not in developing theories of etiology and social-level interventions, but in developing effective treatment programs for facilitating behavior change in individual batterers. Several previous studies from this, and other laboratories, have reported considerable psychopathology among clinically identified male batterers. Such pathology is best summarized

and described as personality disorder and associated features such as alcohol abuse, authority and interpersonal relationship problems, impulsivity, difficulty modulating emotional responses. Within-group factor-analytic analyses from this laboratory have yielded several distinct profile subgroups including schizoidal/borderline, narcissistic/antisocial and passive dependent/compulsive characteristics. Furthermore, men who batter have been found to emerge from families of origin in which abusive violence was both witnessed and directly experienced, as well as in which there were high rates of parental marital dissolution. Between-groups studies from this and other laboratories have also found that, compared to nonbatterers, batterers exhibit higher elevations on measures of psychopathology, as well as social skills deficits and need for power. Such between-groups studies, however, have generally consisted of sample sizes too small to assess group differences <u>within</u> subgroup categorizations such as those derived factor-analytically. Hence, here-to-fore, group studies comparing batterers have been confined to <u>overall</u> <u>group</u> differences and have been unable to capitalize on the heterogeneity inherent in both groups.

The present study compared sufficiently large samples of male batterers (n=99) and help-seeking nonbatterers (n=71) on: 1) Factor structure of the eight personality scales on the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (MCMI) and 2) MCMI profiles within similar subgroup types. The groups were

matched on age, education range, marital status and race.

Male batterers were recruited from a treatment program conducted by the first author. These participants were court referred for assessment and participation in domestic violence abatement counseling. The nonbattering group consisted of males recruited from local marriage and family therapy clinics, family medicine clinics and marital adjustment programs sponsored by local churches. The primary criterion for inclusion in the nonbatterer group was that both the man and his female partner were in agreement (through independent completion of a modified form of the Conflict Tactics Scale) that he had committed no act of physical violence toward his female partner (minimally at the level of push or shove) within the past two years. Within the nonbatterer group, there were equal numbers of maritally distressed and maritally satisfied participants. Because the two nonviolent subgroups showed no differences on any measure, they were combined to afford adequate group size for the factor analysis.

Factor analyses of the eight MCMI personality subscales for the two groups revealed three factors for each group, accounting for 80% of the variance in each group. For the batterer sample, the three factors derived were: Factor 1 - Borderline/Schizoidal, Factor 2- Histrionic/Narcissistic and Factor 3 - Antisocial/Narcissistic. The three factors derived for the nonbatterer group consisted of: Factor 1 - Avoidant, Factor 2 - Antisocial/Narcissistic and Factor 3 -

Passive/Aggressive. Analysis of factor structure similarity between the two groups was calculated using the Cattel index of factor similarity (s index). Only nonbatterer factor 2 and batterer factor 3 achieved an acceptable level of factor similarity (s=.80). Hence, it was concluded that the two groups in the present study were qualitatively different on all but one factor for each group.

Subsequently between-groups multivariate analyses of variance on the eight basic MCMI subscales between Factor 2 nonviolent men and Factor 3 batterers indicated that the batterer group scored higher than the nonbatterer group on the following subscales: Avoidant, Aggressive, Negativistic and lower on the Conforming subscale.

A second factor analysis was conducted using the combined batterer-nonbatterer group. Results showed that, in general, nonviolent men were more highly represented in Factor 2 (Narcissistic/Aggressive), whereas batterers were more highly represented in Factor 1 (Avoidant/Negativistic).

Discussion

The present findings suggest that there are both quantitative and qualitative differences in personality characteristics of domestically violent and nonviolent men. Specifically, in research from this and other laboratories, men who batter have consistently been found to score higher on the MCMI, as well as other measures, than nonviolent men, even when a variety of sociodemographic variables have been controlled. The finding, in the present study, of very

little factor structure congruence between batterers and nonbatterers on the MCMI also suggests that, qualitatively, the two groups represent largely different populations of men. Although some factor structure overlap was observed, it was, for the most part, minimal. Comparison of batterers and nonbatterers exhibiting congruent factor structures (batterer factor 3 and nonbatterer factor 2) on MCMI personality subscales also showed batterers to be quantitatively different, in the direction of greater pathology, than nonbatterers.

Reasons for these differences are not clear, but may be related to such variables as family-of-origin violence and other aspects of life experience which affect personality development.

In terms of treatment implications, it is important in planning treatment, to not assume that men who batter are essentially no different in terms of personality characteritics from nonviolent men and, therefore, that the same technologies apply to intervention but with different targets. The present research, together with other studies from the laboratory, suggest that men who batter have considerble difficulty involving themselves in relationships that require mutuality, reciprocity and self-motivation. They tend to be manipulative, controlling and refractory to limit setting. In many ways, these characteristics are similar to those observed in a variety of offender populations. As such, interventions would best include

strategies used in treating offender groups, such strategies include using clear, unambiguous guidelines for criteria for treatment compliance, timely and consistent application of consequences for failure to comply and, whenever possible, involvement and cooperation with criminal justice authorities. Treatment goals must be realistic, both in terms of the typical short term interventions which characterize many batterer interventions juxtaposed with (often observed) disordered personality characteristics of the client population. Such limitations must be discussed with the victim-partners as part of safety planning and facilitation of informed decision-making about continuation of the relationship.

Table 1.

Factor Loadings In Rotated Factor Matrix

MCMI Personality Subscales	Factor I		Factor II		Factor III	
	Batterers	Non Violent Controls	Batterers	Non Violent Controls	Batterers	Non Violent Controls
Asocial	.747	.889	-.399	-.094	.061	.016
Avoidant	.894	.849	-.310	-.229	-.112	.345
Submissive	.109	.287	-.013	-.753	-.900	-.011
Gregarious	-.084	-.832	.920	.199	.027	.368
Narcissistic	-.122	-.492	.770	.653	.384	.157
Aggressive	.275	.042	.351	.924	.792	.125
Conforming	-.760	.145	-.340	-.096	-.122	-.899
Negativistic	.907	.135	-.020	.102	.029	.909

Cattell "S" Values

		Batterer Factors		
		I	II	III
Community Factors	I	.57	-.40	0
	II	0	.40	.80
	III	.67	0	0

Table 2.

Batterer-Nonbatterer differences on MCMI personality subscales for congruent factors 3 and 2, respectively

Subscale	Group		
	Batterers	Nonviolent	Univariate F (1,83)
Asocial	11.1	9.5	n.s.
Avoidant	8.8	6.4	3.99 $p < .049$
Submissive	9.5	9.9	n.s.
Gregarious	15.1	15.2	n.s.
Narcissistic	25.1	24.2	n.s.
Aggressive	20.4	18.6	5.69, $p < .02$
Conforming	24.4	27.8	5.45, $p < .02$
Negativistic	11.0	6.5	16.68, $p < .0001$

Wilkes lambda = .794, $F_{8,76} = 2.47$, $p < .02$

Table 3.

Mean factor scores and factor groupings from factor analysis of combined batterer-nonbatterer sample

Factor	1	2	3
Nonbatterers	-.432	.058	-.154
Batterers	.310	-.042	.110

Percent of samples in each of 8 factor groupings

	Nonbatterers	Batterers
pure factor 1	9.9	16.2
pure factor 2	23.9	7.1
pure factor 3	15.5	13.1
Hi 1 and 2 low 3	8.5	12.1
Hi 1 and 3 low 2	4.2	19.2
Hi 2 and 3 low 1	16.9	12.1
Hi 1,2,3	2.8	12.1
Low 1,2,3	18.3	8.1

Table 4.

Demographic Characteristics of batterers and nonbatterers

Group	Batterers	Nonbatterers
n	99	71
Age	34.6	35.1
Education		
<High School	42	22
Some College	39	31
College Grad	11	20
Race		
Caucasian	86	64
Black	7	3
Hispanic	3	2
Other	3	1
Employment		
Employed	80	68
Unemployed	19	3
Witnessed Abuse		
Yes	30	6
No	65	65
Abused		
Yes	71	6
No	24	65